Islam and Secularism

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INTRODUCTION

Praise be to Allah; we praise Him, seek His forgiveness, and turn to Him in repentance. We seek refuge with Him from the evils of our souls and the evils of our deeds. Whomever Allah guides, none can misguide, and whomever Allah leads astray, none can guide. I bear witness that there is no god but Allah alone without partner, and I bear witness that Muhammad is His servant and Messenger.

This short treatise began as a lecture that I gave many years ago at the Abû Bakr Grand Mosque in Madinah. My speech was concise and quite general, though the topic itself is vast and multifaceted. I have kept this treatise equally as concise to provide for readers who just need a general introduction to this topic.

For those readers who want to explore this matter further, there are many books available. One of the best, in my opinion, is the book *Secularism* written by my esteemed colleague Sheikh Safar al-Hawâlî.

I have organized this treatise into the following chapters:

Chapter One: A Contemporary Manifestation of *Jâhiliyyah*

Chapter Two: No Place for Secularism in the Muslim World

Chapter Three: How Secularism Came to Islamic Lands

Chapter Four: Defining a Secularist

Chapter Five: The Need to Confront Secularism

I ask Allah to make this effort of mine exclusively for His sake and to accept it from me. I humbly ask Him to reward me for it and to forgive me my mistakes. Truly, Allah is capable of all things.

CHAPTER ONE
A Contemporary Manifestation of Jâhiliyyah

The struggle between Islam and secularism is nothing new. It is just the age old struggle between Islam and *Jâhiliyyah*[1] in a new guise. *Jâhiliyyah*, the way of ignorance, comes in many forms, has many names, and adopts various symbols, but it always has the same common denominator – polytheism. The conflict between Islam and secularism is none other than the conflict between Islam and polytheism. It is the struggle against the enemies of the Prophets that began in antiquity when Allah sent the very first Prophet to humanity and it will continue until Allah puts an end to the Earth and everything on it.

The Fervor of Jâhiliyyah

When *Jâhiliyyah* goes to war, it is goaded on by bigotry. It does not do so to elevate the name of Allah.

Allah says: "While the Unbelievers stirred up in their hearts fervor - the fervor of ignorance, Allah sent down His tranquility upon his Messenger and the believers…" [*Sûrah al-Fath*: 26]

The unbelievers call to bigotry and the ignorance of the times before Islam. The Prophet (peace be upon him) expressly forbade us from hearkening to this call, saying: "Do you call to the claims of Jâhiliyyah while I am among you. Leave such claims, for they are truly rotten."[2]

Besides the banner of Islam, every banner that is raised is a banner of *Jâhiliyyah*. Take for example, the banner of nationalism. Nationalism asks us to give our lives for the sake of the ground we walk on. We are told to die for our countries. This is not an Islamic call. It is not what the Prophet (peace be upon him) meant when he said: "Whoever fights so that the word of Allah is supreme has fought in the path of Allah."[3]

In truth, the nation has become for many contemporary secularists an idol to be worshipped. One of them went so far as to say:

My country! It they fashioned for me out of it an idol,
I would approach that idol and kiss it.

Another nationalist poet writes:

O my country! I meet you after despair
As if I am meeting along with you my youth.

[1] The word *Jâhiliyyah* refers to the times of ignorance before Islam.
[2] *Sahîh al-Bukhârî* (4905). *Sahîh Muslim* (2584).
[3] *Sahîh al-Bukhârî* (123). *Sahîh Muslim* (1904).

I turn my face to you before I turn it to the Sacred House
When I make my declaration of faith and repent my sins.

Among the banners of *Jâhiliyyah* are the banners of racism and ethnic bigotry. There are those who take Arabism as their singular and exclusive faith. All of these banners have been trampled in the dust since the time that Allah sent His Prophet Muhammad and made him the criterion for all people. Those who accepted his call were black and white, Arab and non-Arab, noblemen and commoners. All of them proclaimed "There is no God but Allah." They became a select brotherhood that knew no divisions among themselves. At the same time, they proclaimed their enmity towards people like Abû Jahl, Abû Lahab, and other members of the Quraysh nobility, in spite of those people being of the highest social status and pedigree.

The Rule of Jâhiliyyah

When *Jâhiliyyah* seeks to rule, it does so according to the ways of ignorance. "Do they seek after a judgment of the times of ignorance? But who gives a better judgment than Allah for a people whose faith is assured?" [*Sûrah al-Mâ'idah*: 50]

Secularists in our lands believe that the affairs of people and society can never be set right except by importing systems of law from the East or West. This is why we find the secularists following like beggars behind the East and West. They are only good at blind following. They even bring to us the most wretched problems of those civilizations, claiming that this is the path to development and civilization.

If the *Jâhiliyyah* of old appealed to the pagan practices of the Arabian tribes for its laws, then the Secularists want us to appeal to the constitutions and laws of other countries that have their own legal philosophies that run contrary to our religion and our view of life, crime, judgment, punishment, and sometimes even our concept of right and wrong.

The Sexual Wantonness of Jâhiliyyah

Though it calls to modernization and progress, this *Jâhiliyyah* of today is really only calling to Westernization and ruination in the name of personal liberty and the liberation of the woman. If they were more just in their descriptions, they would call it the anarchy that it is.

If they want to call this "liberation" by its proper name, they would call it the lewd displays of the old *Jâhiliyyah*. Allah says: "And make not a wanton display like the lewd displays of the times of ignorance." [*Sûrah al-Ahzâb*: 33] Such displays are not governed by ethical considerations nor sanctioned by religion.

The Usury of Jâhiliyyah

If we study the economic thinking and practices of the times of ignorance before Islam, we see that it was founded on interest. The Prophet (peace be upon him) rejected it

outright during the sermon that he gave on his farewell pilgrimage. He said: "All the interest owed from the times of ignorance is abolished. The first interest that I cancel is interest owed to ourselves – specifically the interest owed to al-`Abbâs b. `Abd al-Muttalib."

Secularism, today's Jâhiliyyah, is reviving this long-dead practice of old by adopting the "modern" international economic system that sees interest as indispensable.

The Suspicions of Jâhiliyyah

Allah says: "A group was stirred to anxiety by their own feelings, moved by suspicions about Allah, suspicions of the times of ignorance." [*Sûrah Âl `Imrân*: 154]

Allah tells us more about these people: "You can see how those in whose hearts is a disease eagerly run about amongst them saying: 'We fear lest a change of fortune bring us disaster.' Ah! Perhaps Allah will give you victory or a decision from Him. Then they will regret the thoughts that they secretly harbored in their hearts." [*Sûrah al-Mâ'idah*: 52]

The original *Jâhiliyyah* thought that Islam did no have a leg to stand on and that its strength would ebb very soon. The unbelievers of that time could not imagine that the message of monotheism would be proclaimed from every pulpit and every minaret. Allah proved their suspicions false. Steadily Islam grew in power until it embraced many peoples. It has extended into the hearts of Europe and America. The call to prayer is proclaimed all over the world five times a day: "Allah is the greatest. I bear witness that there is no God but Allah and I bear witness that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah."

The original *Jâhiliyyah* thought that Islam would have no future. We see that this *Jâhiliyyah* of today discusses every power in the world and entertains every possibility to the exclusion of Islam which it pointedly ignores. The secularists focus on a small minority of people in our societies who have turned their backs on their way of life, their religion, and their ethics. The secularists try to depict these people as the vanguard of society and as the ideal of cultural advancement. They ignore the masses of people who proclaim day and night that they are not pleased with anything besides Islam and that they live their lives according to Islam and for Islam.

From this it should be clear that the struggle between Islam and secularism, in all of its dimensions, is none other than the struggle between Islam and *Jâhiliyyah*.

Secularism is Polytheism

The differences between Islam and secularism are substantial. The issue at hand is none other than the difference between monotheism and polytheism.

The phrase "Give unto Caesar what is Caesar's and give unto Allah what is Allah's" is exactly what the pagans in Mecca were saying when the Prophet (peace be upon him) was sent to them.

Allah informs us in the *Qur'ân* that they used to say:

"They assign unto Allah, of the crops and cattle which He created, a portion, and they say: 'This is for Allah - in their make-believe – 'and this is for His partners with respect to us'." [*Surah al-An`âm*: 136]

"Yet they attribute to some of His servants a share with Him." [*Sûrah al-Zukhruf*: 15]

"And they assign unto Allah that which they themselves dislike, and their tongues pronounce the lie that the better portion will be theirs. Assuredly theirs will be the Fire, and they will be hastened to it and abandoned." [*Sûrah al-Nahl*: 62]

This *Jâhiliyyah* of today is exactly like the *Jâhiliyyah* of old. They say that the mosque is for Allah and everything else is for "Caesar". The schools are for Caesar. The media is for other than Allah. They restrict Islam to the mosque and the prayer room. Everything else is to be governed without resort to Islamic Law. This is outright polytheism.

How can we possibly reconcile between the position of secularism and Allah's command: "Say: verily my prayer, my sacrifice, my life, and my death are for Allah, the Lord of All the Worlds. He has no partner. This is how I have been commanded and I am the first of those who submit." [*Sûrah al-An`âm*: 162-163]

How can we reconcile secularism with the meaning of the declaration of faith "There is no God but Allah" which means that no aspect of worship or devotion must be offered to anything or anyone besides Allah? All worship directed elsewhere is polytheism, false and rejected.

Therefore, secularism is polytheism. It states that the mosque is for Allah and everything else is for other than Allah, or as the Christian's say: "for Caesar".

CHAPTER TWO
No Place for Secularism in the Muslim World

We established in the previous chapter that secularism, in its very nature, violates the principle of monotheism. Now we turn our attentions to the question of the possibility of secularism existing in the Muslim world. Can a Muslim who prays in the mosque accept secularism?

The mosque in Islam is not a place wherein people recite their prayers and then leave their religion at the door on the way out. The mosque is not only a place of worship for

the Muslim, but a place of guidance and learning. It must have a lasting effect on the Muslim that he takes with him when he returns home, goes to work, or shops in the market. When a Muslim's heart is tied to the mosque, his prayers in the mosque affect his life, keeping him from sin and guiding him to what is best. A Muslim listens to Allah's laws when he is seated in the mosque, laws that cover all aspects of his life, great and small. The mosque, therefore, should be the starting point of all life's activities.

Secularism has no place in the lands of Islam for two reasons:

The first of these is that Islam is the religion that Allah sent down to replace the previous manifestations of the faith and to govern all aspects of life. The simplest Muslim can see how Islam explains all matters in detail. It is impossible for a Muslim to feel that the religion that regulates his marital affairs, his business, his eating habits, his manner of sleeping, and even how he goes to the bathroom could ever leave managing the political and economic affairs of society to other than Allah. For Allah says:

"We have neglected nothing in the Book." [*Sûrah al-An`âm*: 38]

"We have sent down to you the Book explaining all things" [*Sûrah al-Nahl*: 89]

This issue is not open for debate. Islam, as the final religion, has supremacy over all faiths and over every aspect of life. There is no place for secularism in the lands of Islam or among the Muslims.

The second reason is that throughout the history of Islam, it never experienced the troubles that were faced by Europe on account of its corrupted faith. Among the most important of these was the horrific breach that took place between religion and science. Religion fought against science so fiercely that the church burned some scientists to death on the grounds that those scientists went against the word of Allah.

Islamic history contains nothing of the sort. Islam opened the doors to scientific enquiry and encouraged intellectual activity. Scientists were frequent guests at the courts and assemblies of various caliphs and received a fair share of royal gifts and patronage. The Muslim world never in its long history encountered the persecution and restriction of its scientists. There were no inquisitions like there were in Europe.

Islam never experienced the abuses of a Church that took from the people great sums of money, restricted their intellectual lives, and burned their scientists and thinkers, all in the name of religion. Quite the contrary, Muslim history is one of amicability between science and the religion whose first revelation was "Read in the name of your Lord who created." Science is one of the fruits of proper adherence to Islam. It is a result of obeying Allah's command to learn, teach, read, and study.

Those who wish to bring secularism to the Muslim world ignore this major difference between the religious history of the Islamic world and the religious history of Europe wherein secularism developed.

CHAPTER THREE
How Secularism Came to Islamic Lands

Many of the Muslim lands have fallen into the hands of the unbelievers. For example, Andalusia, the paradise of the Muslim world, fell to them. Now Palestine has fallen as well. There are those states that were formerly part of the Soviet Union and those that are still part of Russia. Still, these countries and others like them are limited in number and what happened to them is well known.

However, when we ask how many of the Muslim lands have fallen into the hands of hypocritical secularists, we find that they are too numerous to count. In truth, most of the Muslim lands have fallen into their hands and not the hands of the unbelievers. The reason for this is that hypocritical people know how to seize what they want discretely. They seek out positions of influence so they can have an affect on Muslim lands in order to obliterate their distinctiveness. The adaptability of hypocrites to all circumstances is what makes hypocrisy is so dangerous. They know how to wear many hats and speak with many voices. They can put on a different persona whenever the need arises.

A poet once wrote:

He has a thousand faces after he lost his own face,
So you will never know which face to believe.

This is the case with the secularists in the Muslim world. They present many different faces and have numerous masks. Their hearts are fickle. Therefore, it is necessary to expose them.

Allah says about the hypocrites: "They are the enemy, so beware of them. The curse of Allah is on them. How they are deluded!" [*Sûrah al-Munâfiqûn*: 4]

? Turkey: A Case Study

One of the first countries to fall into the hands of the secularists was Turkey, which at one time was the center of political power for the Islamic world. It fell as a result of what some Christians like to call "the struggle between the Cross and the Crescent". The then head of the Christian secularization missions said: "The fruits of struggle between the cross and the crescent will not come forth in the remote, outlying countries or in our colonies in Asia and Africa. It will happen in the centers from which Islam draws its strength and spread outward from there, whether in Africa or Asia. Since the Islamic peoples who we are confronting look towards Istanbul, our efforts will be of no consequence if they do not bring us closer to demolishing the edifice of Islam in the center of the Caliphate and the capitol of the Muslim world."

The Christians worked in cooperation with the Jews to bring about the downfall of the Caliphate. It was infiltrated by people like Medhat Pasha, a very influential Jew during the final years of the Ottoman Empire. On occasion, he even had a hand in deposing one Caliph and instating another. He had a role to play in the ratification of the country's constitution and the granting of freedoms that he had been a vocal advocate for. It became clear later on that his only concern was for the freedom of himself and is fellow Jews and not for the entire populace. Such was the lament of Sultan `Abd al-Hamîd. The Jews prepared for and eagerly awaited the fall of the Ottoman Empire so they could carry out their plans against Palestine. Some of them, like the Jews of Donma, even pretended to be Muslims so they could more effectively influence the country's politics.

The West hailed Medhat Pasha as "the father of freedom" since he was so vociferous in espousing freedom and pushed for the ratification of a constitution that guaranteed minority rights, including the right of the Jews to conduct themselves as they wished under the protection of the Ottoman Empire.

One of their strategies for secularization was to create heroes. A good example of this strategy was the creation of Kemal Attaturk. They involved him in the war against Greece from which he was to come forth as victorious. In this way they primed him and strengthened him for the role that they wanted him to play in bringing down the edifice of Islam and establishing secularism in Turkey. They succeeded through him in separating Turkey from the Muslim world.

Muslims around the world ceased to care what happened in Turkey. Before that time, any threat to Istanbul worried the hearts of every Muslim on Earth since they saw it as a matter of primary concern for the Muslim world. The Muslims had a strong emotional attachment to the Turkish Caliphate, in spite of all its shortcomings. When the Turkish caliphate fell, the Muslims around the world lost interest in it. Henceforth, Turkeys affairs would no longer occupy the minds and hearts of the world's Muslims.

One of the most important tasks carried out by Kemal Attaturk when he attained power was the persecution, expulsion, and slaughter of Turkey's Muslim scholars. During this time, the head scholar of Ottoman Turkey, Mustafâ Sabrî, died as a refugee in Egypt after fleeing from his country. Attaturk also destroyed all religious institutions. He even prohibited the call to prayer from being made in Arabic and prohibited writing in the Arabic script, replacing that script with the Latin alphabet. He imposed Western dress upon the people. He attempted to transform the Turkish people and give them an entirely new national identity.

Another strategy was to select a group of people to represent and advance the interests of secularism in Muslim Turkey. The enemies of Islam from among the Jews and Christians were clearly and openly in league with the secularists in the Muslim world. They sponsored many select young secularists to study in Western countries and acquire Western scientific knowledge and advanced administrative skills. When they returned to their own countries, they were truly a distinctive class of people, sometimes described as "cultured" or "enlightened" They were in an ideal position to carry out the task that they

were trained for. The West had chosen them then endowed them with valuable skills while keeping the rest of their people in ignorance. Then they could use those select people for their own purposes.

The first task set out for these people was for them to become entrenched in the Ottoman government. They would work from these positions within the government against the scholars and Islamic activists.

These people enjoyed the confidence of the government and could use their position to spread their ideas among the Muslims behind the veil of the government machinery. They could do what they wanted and spread their base ideas and values without fearing any negative response from the government.

At the same time, they were successful in blackening the reputation of the Turkish government and in turning the people against it. It was their task to prepare the people for the eventual overthrow of the government. The people grew dissatisfied with the Ottoman government. The religious people hated the government because of the secularist influences that now permeated it. The rest of the population hated it simply because it failed to ensure their welfare. This created a number of dangerous opportunities for the secularists to exploit.

At the same time, they were intent on preventing the religious scholars from capitalizing on any of these opportunities. They recognized that the society contained within it two power bases. The first was of these was the religious power base comprised of the scholars and other religious activists. The other was that of the secularists and hypocrites.

Allah describes both of these groups in the *Qur'ân*. He says: "The believers, men and women, are protectors one of another: they enjoin what is right, and forbid what is evil." [*Sûrah al-Tawbah*: 71]

Describing the other faction, he says: "The hypocrites, both men and women, proceed one from another. They enjoin what is evil, and they forbid what is right, and they withhold their hands (from charity)." [*Sûrah al-Tawbah*: 67]

From their positions within the government, they worked to alienate the government from the scholars and weaken the scholars' political influence. In this way, the secularists hoped to prevent the scholars from bringing about any political reform while they continued their efforts at increasing corruption and instability from within the government that they were ostensibly a part of.

The secularization of Turkey went through the following phases, culminating in the republic of Attaturk:

The first phase: The secularists applied their western expertise to modernizing and reforming the administration of the Ottoman Empire. In this way they showed themselves to be valuable and indispensable on account of their knowledge and experience.

This was the first, most subtle phase of secularization that most people tend to overlook, since the role played by the secularists at that time was a role that generally could not be carried out by scholars and students of Islamic knowledge. First of all, Islamic scholars were involved in other things. Moreover, Islamically oriented people were not afforded the opportunities those secularists had to acquire such expertise. This made many Muslims oblivious to what was going on at this stage of development.

The second phase: Once the secularists were firmly entrenched in government, they began applying pressure to speed up the disintegration of the state. They were not satisfied with the gradual corruption of religious values. They wanted to speed up Westernization much faster than the general public could ever be expected to accommodate. There was also a reversal of roles at this time between the secularists and the government. During the first phase, the Ottoman rulers were in charge and the secularists were riding their coattails. Now the secularists were in the lead and dictating to the intimidated Ottoman rulers. This state of affairs becomes more aggravated during the next phase.

The third phase: At this point, the secularists began their direct assault on very sensitive matters, including the political values of the state and the religious values of the people. They began openly targeting the religion and religious scholars.

They were actively nurturing political tension and general discontent at this point. In their public addresses and published articles, they openly talked against Islamic teachings. In periodicals throughout the Muslim world, they made sure to have something published in every issue that criticized one Islamic value or another or that targeted a prominent Muslim scholar or that cast doubt on a matter of faith or religious practice. They came up with slogans like "Religion is for Allah, but the nation is for everyone".

What made their efforts at this stage so dangerously effective was that they did not present themselves as a single force that could scare people away or mobilize an opposition. They were very subtle in their alliance with one another. They appeared to be just disparate individuals with strange ideas or weakness in their religious faith. They were very successful in hiding the ties that they had to one another.

Sometimes, the government would benefit from such people to bring about some form of corruption that it wanted. It would call upon them to introduce a certain vice and give them the green light to do as they liked. They might be allowed to try something out in a particular area. If the population accepted it, they could go to something larger. If, however, the people rejected what they introduced, it was quite easy to backtrack, since the government was never officially involved.

The secularists at this time operated like the proverbial thief with a hooked cane who would use the hook to snatch up the possessions of others. If he was caught, he would say that he was unaware that the cane accidentally caught the object. If he went unnoticed, he would make off with his prize.

The fourth phase: In the final days of the Empire – right before, during, and right after the reign of Sultan `Abd al-Hamîd – there were serious military threats and dire political and economic problems. The secularists took advantage of these major crises to advance their aims. At this time, the secularist came out in the open with their true allegiances. They began operating openly as an opposition force in preparation for their eventual takeover. They established organizations and political movements. They produced their own publications and convened conferences. They allied themselves with foreign enemies of the Ottoman State, like the Jews and Christians, as can be clearly seen in their documentation from that time.

In this way, they ultimately gained total power in Turkey.

Methods Employed to Spread Secularism in Society

There were many approaches employed by the secularists to spread their ideas and their influence throughout Turkish society. Among the most important of these were the following:

1. Stripping society of its Islamic presence, institutions, and values. They started with substituting Islamic values and mores with their own in the media, in education, in economics, and in politics. They did not stop there, since they could be satisfied with nothing less than the total eradication of Islam from society. Therefore, they even targeted Islamic dress, tampered with the language, and changed the call to prayer. These and many other changes were imposed on the people by force in decrees issued by Kemal Attaturk.

2. Effecting social change by targeting women. They realized that women have a definite impact on the dynamics of society. A society could be brought to its moral ruin if its women are morally corrupted, exposed, and encouraged to be licentious. The temptations of women are difficult to resist. A society conducive to promoting such temptations will find its moral fabric compromised. This is why the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: "Be piously fearful with respect to the world and with respect to women, for truly the first temptation of the Children of Israel was through its women." [Sahîh Muslim (2742)]

The secularists also realized that by focusing on the issue of women, they could divide society. This is because the issue of women is not only a sensitive matter to religious people, but to all people possessing a sense of honor and shame. Indeed, many non-religious people can be brought to rage when they see their wives, sisters, or daughters behaving in a compromising position with a strange man. The secularists realized that this was a way for them to tear the fabric of Ottoman society apart and divide up its citizenry into clearly distinct groups of various degrees of conservatism.

3. Exploiting ethnic and religious minorities. The secularists used these minorities to put pressure on the Ottoman state in its implementation of Islamic Law. They argued that those minorities were part of society and that they cannot be expected to adhere to

Islamic Law. So they could exploit them as a barrier against the implementation of Islamic Law in Turkey, these secularists overlooked the centuries that these minorities lived under Islamic rule with all of their rights protected. The secularists also realized that these minorities would be more sincerely committed to secularist reforms than most of the Muslim supporters of secularism whose commitment to secularism often had its limits and who might very well forsake them in the end.

CHAPTER FOUR
Defining a Secularist

Contrary to what some people think, a secularist is not necessarily an atheist. Some secularists are actually quite regular in their prayers. However, they believe that religion belongs in the mosque and that the role of religious scholars should be confined to presiding over marriage ceremonies and funerals. In no event, should their role be broadened further than that. They see that politics has nothing to do with religion. One of their number, `Alî `Abd al-Razzâq, wrote a book entitled *Islam and the Principles of Governance* wherein he denies that Islam has any relationship to politics and claims that the caliphate is an institution that has no basis in the sacred texts. He argues that the caliphate was an institution based on custom and personal juristic opinion and that it could easily be abolished. A book entitled From Here We Begin, espousing the very same ideas, was written by Khâlid Muhammad Khâlid, who later publicly recanted for the falsehood and unbelief contained in his book.

Some secularists are indeed atheists, but this does not prevent them from pandering to the religious sentiment of the people. This is why we see that some of the most ardent secularists who initially showed the most hostility to Islam later on started talking about concepts like "Islamic socialism" and "Islamic democracy". One of them went so far as to claim that there is nothing to prevent the existence of Islamic communism. All of this is clearly evident from their writings. Some of them even made their true intentions explicit, like the one who said: "The issue at hand is that of riding the wave of popular sentiment. Today the people are turning to Islam. Therefore, there is nothing wrong with us raising the Islamic banner so we can ride the current as long as we have to. Afterwards, we will be able to realize our aims and objectives."

The secularist basically calls for the separation of religion from politics. They claim that religion is too lofty, too pure, to sublime to become involved in politics. In other words, what they are saying is that religion should make a retreat and leave our lives to be governed by a Godless law. Allah says: "Do they seek after a judgment of the times of ignorance? But who gives a better judgment than Allah for a people whose faith is assured?" [*Sûrah al-Mâ'idah*: 50]

The secularist accuses those who speak in the name of Islam of having ulterior motives. In a book entitled *The Crisis of the Arab Intellectual* one leading secularists describes religious currents in society in the following way: "Generally, the people behind such

religious movements are seeking political power or have their own personal agendas or are ethnically motivated. They seek to realize their goals under the pretence of religion so they can capitalize on the religious sentiments of the people."

The secularist calls for religion to be removed from education. One of them went so far as to say: "Education in America is of a very high standard because they teach small children to question everything from the time their fingernails are still soft. The child is raised to accept nothing without evidence. As for our countries, we teach our children how to clean themselves after going to the bathroom. We bring a bowl of water and say: 'In the name of Allah'. This is what they learn. The Americans have a high standard of education, because they teach a child to doubt everything, including religion."

What is strange is that a number of years ago, a book was published entitled *America in Danger* that was put together by a committee of eighteen specialists in various fields over the course of a year and a half. One of the most important recommendations given in the book to strengthen the nation and protect it from destruction was to increase religious education and cultivate strong religious sentiments in the American student. This would protect them from the corruption and debasement that prevents them from making their desired contribution to society.

While Americans and others – even the Russians – are asking to bring Allah back into the schools, these secularists in our lands want to remove religion from our children's education and replace subjects like *Qur'ân* and Islamic Studies with more sports and science.

The secularists also want to get religion out of the media and even out of the arts. In short, they want to remove religion from every aspect of our lives.

CHAPTER FIVE
The Need to Confront Secularism

It is clear that secularism must be confronted. When we talk about them, we do not want to exaggerate their power and importance. Our religion teaches us that we are stronger than they are. Islam is as firm and constant as the mountains. Many waves have crashed upon the rock of Islam only to be repelled. However, this was only achieved by our efforts. We must confront secularism and resist it with every means at our disposal. Two of the most important of these means are as follows:

1. We must expose and clarify what the secularists are doing. Allah exposed the machinations of the hypocrites and discusses them in many chapters of the *Qur'ân*. In the chapter of the Qur'ân entitled *Sûrah al-Tawbah*, Allah discusses many different types of hypocrite. For this reason, the chapter is also called "The Exposition", since it leaves no hypocrite without exposing him.

We want our scholars, Islamic workers, and students of Islamic knowledge to apply the approach of that chapter of the *Qur'ân* in exposing the secularists. We need people today who can identify them and expose all of their different tricks and strategies. This is especially important since the secularists are often extremely eloquent in their speech. Allah describes the hypocrites of old in the same way: "When they speak, you listen to their words." [*Sûrah al-Munâfiqûn*: 4]

Allah says: "When the hypocrites approach you (O Muhammad), they say: 'We bear witness that you are indeed the Messenger of Allah.' Allah knows that you are indeed His Messenger and Allah bears witness that the hypocrites are liars." [*Sûrah al-Munâfiqûn*: 1]

The secularists must be exposed because they are deceiving much of the general public. They are dressing up their words and ideas with Islamic slogans and are selectively quoting from the *Qur'ân* and *Sunnah* and the scholarly works of old, and even citing principles of Islamic Law to spread their ideas. For this reason, many Muslims may follow them.

Exposing them must be accomplished without misconduct, agitation, and anger. It must be conducted in an objective, factual manner so that even your opponent has no choice but to concede to the truth of what you say.

2. We must work hard for our religion. Allah never lets the works of any man or woman go to waste, not in this world and not in the Hereafter. He does not withhold the reward of those who do right. Likewise, Allah does not make good the works of those who spread mischief and corruption. Their works are indeed wasted and their achievements are fleeting. As for the believers, they are assured that their works are preserved, both in this life and in the life to come. Allah says: "Relent not in pursuit of the enemy. If you are suffering, lo! they suffer even as you suffer, and you hope from Allah that for which they cannot hope." [*Sûrah al-Nisâ'*: 104]

What we mentioned about the history of Turkey has happened and continues to happen over and over again in many Muslim lands. Sometimes the strategies are the same and sometimes they are different, depending on the circumstances. In any case, the struggle between Islam and secularism goes on throughout the Muslim world and affects its people, just like it did in Turkey.

An Arabic verse reads: "Whoever holds history in his heart has added the lives of others to his own." We should benefit from the experience of others and realize what the secularists are doing to take over and ruin our societies and make us no more than a small part of the West that reared them.